



## **Graduate access to the job market in York – information for the Scrutiny Committee.**

### **Background**

York benefits from a supply of higher education (HE) graduates from its colleges and universities. Together, the Higher York Partners (namely the University of York, York St John University, York College and Askham Bryan College) play host to over 22,500 students per year. Collectively they produce approximately 8,500 graduates per year.

Anecdotal and statistical evidence tells us that York continues to be home for a significant proportion of students after graduation for example; 70% of York St John University remain in York after graduation and the majority of graduates from Askham Bryan College also take up roles in York and North Yorkshire often supporting not only York's economy, but the wider rural economy. We can also assume that students return to York after studying elsewhere. The percentage of working age (19-64) residents in York qualified to level 4 or above is currently just above the national average at 42.7%<sup>1</sup> so it can be assumed that there are recent graduates amongst these numbers (either those staying on after graduation from one of the York institutions or those returning from study elsewhere).

The economic strategy for York identifies a number of key growth sectors for the City such as: biosciences, creative industries, financial and professional services and tourism/retail/leisure. These map well onto the areas of academic expertise held by the Higher York partners (appendix 1) and one would assume that the 'home grown' supply of graduates could help to develop these sectors through the contribution of higher level skills and to attract inward investment.

### **Graduate Unemployment and Underemployment**

National data regarding employment of recent graduates does not necessarily provide us with an accurate picture for York. However, we know (often anecdotally) that graduates choose to stay or return to York and we know that some remain unemployed and some are underemployed. We can see that if graduates are taking on roles previously taken up by those with lower levels of education that this is potentially having an effect on the rest of the labour market in York.

However, in order to start to make significant progress regarding improved use of graduate talent in York there is an urgent need for further research into:

- Why students stay in, or return to York?
- How many are actually unemployed and available for work (rather than having a year out to travel; unable to work because of a disability etc)?

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<sup>1</sup> 2011 Census 1<sup>st</sup> release

- For those in employment – what types of roles are they doing and for how long?
- Are some graduates using York as a temporary home after graduation before moving elsewhere? <sup>2</sup>
- Are there any trends about the type of graduate (degree subject or otherwise) who are more likely to stay or return?
- Whether graduates are accessing business support/start-up support and what are attitudes about starting a business in York.
- Which graduate start ups are staying in York (and for how long) and which are leaving and why.

### **How are graduates accessing the job market?**

Graduates tend to access jobs independently in the main. Universities and colleges put in place support to empower students through information, guidance, workshops, and access to opportunities (work placements, internships, volunteering).

Information is disseminated through various channels:

- Job fairs and employer events
- Website/s
- Through tutorials
- Bespoke workshops on practical aspects of jobs searching, CV writing etc.

Information includes literature covering such things as (national) graduate schemes, company profiles, lists of job search sites etc.

For some graduates, for example those at York St John University, many courses are aligned to professional roles which have well defined routes (e.g. teacher training, allied health professions). This is also the case for some courses offered by the University of York (e.g. nursing, medicine).

In addition to specialist input to the delivery of higher education programmes the range of Foundation Degrees which are offered (particularly by colleges) have been designed in partnership with employers and businesses. The programmes include the delivery of work related learning modules which prepare students for the world of work. The majority of these programmes encourage employer and business representation in the delivery.

Students and graduates are increasing making use of internships, work placements and volunteering to gain experience, improve their CVs and meet potential employers. These opportunities are also invaluable for businesses/charities/host organisations and gradually more are making use of the talent available in York through these schemes. However, there is still more demand for placements than places available and it would be useful to examine how more SMEs could be involved.

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<sup>2</sup> Some students may have positively chosen to remain in York for the medium to long term. However, some students may be waiting for 'milk round' jobs starting the following September because they missed out on the previous milk round. Others may be waiting for a girlfriend/boyfriend to complete studies. There are a range of other reasons why students may simply be intending to stay for a short time.

### **What is the support available to graduates?**

- The National Careers Service (NCS) have a remit to provide advice and information (on-line and telephone support) for all ages – including graduates. Some face-to-face support could be offered. There are no current direct links with the universities though York College do benefit from this.
- York St John University and The University of York continue to support graduates after graduation through on-line, telephone and face-to-face guidance. Universities rarely refer to other agencies as they have specialist advice and support tailored for their own graduates. Both universities can offer a reciprocal service with other universities. These institutions have also been able to add to their core graduate offer when external funding has been available e.g. Economic Investment Challenge Fund supported 250 recent graduates to access enhanced support.
- Job Centre Plus (JCP) have provided support to graduates and appear to be the main provider of assistance to graduates of other universities/colleges outside the City of York. JCP do also refer graduates back to their own universities. York College works closely with NCS and JCP for example of joint working with JCP is offered through a specific programme designed for recent unemployed graduates and delivered by York College in 2012.
- Regular learning and work sessions at Future Prospects are open to graduates but no specific support offered.
- Private companies provide mentoring and coaching, internship placement services and other support specifically for undergraduates and graduates including for specific subject areas.

### **Potential barriers to employment**

- There are still some employers reporting a lack of skills from applicants but also issues of interpersonal skills/attitude as well as the importance of well qualified graduates being able to differentiate themselves from others (important in a competitive job market).
- More local employers, particularly SMEs need to be open to taking on graduates or providing work experience/internships to undergraduates, postgraduates and graduates.
- Many national graduate schemes ask for high UCAS tariff score as well as a 2:1 or above degree classification.
- In some non-graduate roles, there is so much competition and sometimes less qualified applicants are favoured as graduates are perceived as being too ambitious/over qualified .
- Anecdotally, we can see that some graduates don't wish to leave York for variety of reasons. There needs to be a balance of both realism (ie. currently not enough graduate jobs) and utilising talent within the city (i.e. developing more graduate roles).
- The acquisition of experience is one of the defining factors to success. More opportunities to get this experience is as crucial as getting the 'right' advice. Examples of useful experience include volunteering, internships/ placements, institutional programmes such as the York Award, part-time jobs.

### **Enterprise and business support**

- At the universities this is well covered through dedicated support in business development teams and access to business incubation units.

- Specifically, the University of York are currently running an UnLtd project for social enterprise.
- Both universities access the Proof of Concept fund, and also tap into Alumni support.
- More generic signposting information from across the city including resource such as [yorkmeansbusiness.co.uk](http://yorkmeansbusiness.co.uk) and the contacts for incubation space, business support, business networks could perhaps be sent to all graduates when they graduate.
- Some start-ups, particularly in the technology field are possibly more likely to move away from York. Others in retail or creative areas are possibly more likely to stay.

### **Good practice - what sort of support and schemes seem to work well?**

- Working at sector / programme level so that advice and support is tailored to specific industries - rather than offering generic advice.
- Combining incubation space with access to on-site business support.
- Early intervention and intensive support whilst on-course. The University of York have an on-line Employability tutorial which results in an employment plan. This was only introduced in 2011 so no results are yet known.
- Internships, work placements and volunteering allow students to begin thinking about their career plans as well as demonstrating value of graduate skills to the workplace.
- Providing specific advice – e.g. at The University of York, advisors offered a ‘webcasting’ service where graduates email their CV and this is annotated by an advisor.
- Information tailored to initiatives such as national / local graduate schemes, internships and work placements.
- Specific interventions for graduates who are un / under-employed. Both universities are running short term internship schemes from January 2013.
- Working closely with local businesses and key employers such as the joint development and delivery of the Foundation Degree in Health Service Management, a partnership between York College and the York NHS Hospital Trust.
- Example from outside York for example; ‘Unlocking Cornish Potential’– supporting business growth with knowledge transfer (via graduate internships opportunities); also links to graduate start-up advice and support (heavily subsidised).

### **Summary**

We know that graduates are staying on in, or return to York and that some remain unemployed and increasingly others are underemployed. There are a range of support agencies and information available to graduates including about business start up. For the future it would be important that York is able to:

- Understand the issues in much more detail through further research.
- Encourage inward investment of businesses providing high quality opportunities for graduates. The graduate talent pool needs to be one of the key benefits highlighted to investors in York.
- Work with local businesses and other organisations to increase the take up of interns and similar opportunities.

- Continue to provide graduates with information about where and how support is available.
- Increase, where funding permits, the one-to-one support, assessments and workshops for graduates seeking employment.
- Continue to facilitate networking and joint support between organisations/agencies which provide support for those looking for employment.

**For further information please contact the Jessica Grant or Claire Newhouse on 01904 876350 or [contactus@higheryork.org](mailto:contactus@higheryork.org)**

## **Appendix 1:**

### **Askham Bryan Higher Education provision**

Animal Management  
Veterinary Nursing  
Agriculture and Land Management  
Arboriculture and Forestry  
Countryside and Environment  
Equine Management / Equine Studies  
Horticulture Landscaping, Garden Management and Sportsturf  
Teacher Training

### **The University of York departments**

Archaeology  
Biology  
Chemistry  
Computer Science  
Economics & related studies  
Education  
Electronics  
English & related literature  
Health Sciences  
History  
History of Art  
Languages and Linguistic Science  
Law  
Mathematics  
Medical  
Music  
Philosophy  
Physics  
Politics  
Psychology  
Social Policy & Social Work  
Sociology  
Theatre, Film & Television

### **York College Higher Education subject areas**

Business & Professional Studies  
Child Studies  
Construction  
Education and Training  
Engineering  
Fine Art, Design & Crafts  
Beauty & Holistic Therapy  
Healthcare  
IT & Computing  
Science  
Sport  
Public Services

**York St John University Faculties**

Arts

Business School

Education and Theology

Health and Life Sciences